Preparing to Leave the Hospital

Hospital stays are often short due to changes in health care delivery and technology. This handout will give you things to consider about your care after discharge, such as:

- Define discharge planning
- Describe how it is done
- Present various discharge options
- List members of the health care team who will help
- Provide you with resources to use after you go home

We hope that you find this handout helpful and useful.

What is discharge planning?
Discharge planning helps you, your family and the health care team coordinate your care during and after you leave the hospital.

- What help will be needed?
- Who will help?
- What equipment will be needed?
- Can these services be provided for you when you get home?

Discharge planning varies with each person. Most patients leave the hospital and go home after a short stay. Extra care at home is not needed because they can care for themselves.

Sometimes, care after a hospital stay is needed. This care can be provided in different ways based on what you need. Planning for discharge before you leave the hospital will make things easier for you after you leave.

What are my responsibilities?
You and your family should learn about your condition and what care will be needed to continue your recovery. You and your family need to understand:

- What help will be needed.
- What medicines you will be taking.
- How to take your medicines.
- Possible side effects of your medicines.
- What to do if side effects occur.
- Treatments that will need to be done.
- Equipment that will be needed.
- Special diet changes that may be needed.
- How to advance your activity.
- When to return to the doctor.
- Whom to call if you have questions.
- How these services will be paid for.
Going home checklist

This checklist will help you to think about your health care needs after discharge. When you talk to your doctor or nurse about going home, have this checklist available and refer to it as you discuss your needs. If the answer to many of the questions is no, you may need to consider other discharge options.

What is your home situation?

Yes    No

☐    ☐  Do you live with a spouse, friend, family member or other person who can help you through recovery?

☐    ☐  Are the people you live with in good health?

☐    ☐  Does a family member visiting from out-of-town need to return home within a few days of your going home?

☐    ☐  Will someone be at home with you in the evening or at night?

What is your home environment like?

Yes    No

☐    ☐  The stairs are easy to climb to get into the house or to get to the bedroom.

☐    ☐  The doorways or hallways are easy to pass through.

☐    ☐  There is easy access to a phone in the room where you will recover.

☐    ☐  The bedroom is on the first floor.

☐    ☐  A bedroom can be set-up on the first floor if needed.

☐    ☐  There is a bathroom on the floor where you will recover.

Will you or your family be able to provide the following care, if needed?

Yes    No

☐    ☐  Tube feedings, injections, intravenous medicines, wound care, monitoring blood pressure or other vital signs.

☐    ☐  Taking medicine.

☐    ☐  Providing therapies, such as physical, occupational, speech, respiratory, swallowing or psychological.

☐    ☐  Helping with personal care, like bathing, dressing or going to the bathroom.

☐    ☐  Preparing your meals and feeding you.

☐    ☐  Doing housekeeping, like cleaning, grocery shopping or laundry.

☐    ☐  Caring for children, other elderly relatives or pets.

☐    ☐  Driving to places, such as doctors’ appointments, church or rehabilitation.
What types of services are available?

Today, there are many services available. Although you may need more care, you may not need to stay in the hospital. Care can be given in many ways and in a variety of places. The following discharge options may be considered.

**Independent Care**

Before discharge, the health team members will teach you and your family about the care you will need at home. This may include simple wound care, dressing changes, feeding methods, catheter care, and medicine instructions. If you and your family can manage all of your care needs, you will go home without any community or agency support.

**Home Health Care**

If your care is too complex for you and your family to do, a home health agency may be used. Based on your needs, a nurse may come to your home several times a week or daily. Complex dressing changes, medicine administration or treatments can be done by the nurse. In addition to a nurse, a home health aide may help with activities, such as bathing, grooming, eating and getting out of bed.

**Assisted Living**

Nursing homes do not provide constant attention from nurses or aides. If you are capable of independent living but require some help with personal care and homemaking services, you can benefit from this type of facility. However, it is often not paid for by private insurance.

**Extended Care or Intermediate Care Facility**

These facilities are for those who need daily assistance with more than two of their activities of daily living (ADLs), such as bathing, eating, getting to the bathroom or walking, and are expected to need that level of care for an extended length of time. This is not paid for by private insurance or Medicare. If patient is not able to pay for this level of care, they may be eligible for Medicaid.

**Subacute Rehabilitation or Skilled Nursing Facility**

If you need more time to recover after you have had a long illness, you may need a skilled nursing facility. A skilled nursing facility is available if you need complex medical care or specialized care, like physical, occupational or speech therapy. These facilities can provide 24-hour care to meet these needs. The type of care your doctor feels you need will determine the level of care appropriate for you. This type of care is paid for by Medicare or private insurance.

**Acute Rehabilitation**

Acute rehabilitation provides care after serious injury or illness where intense rehabilitation is needed. It teaches the person who has had a stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury or orthopedic problems and their family member about self-care, skin management, mobility, cognition, leisure and living in the community. The goal of inpatient rehabilitation is to get the patient home or to a lesser level of care.

**Hospice**

Hospice care is available if you have a life threatening or terminal illness and have decided not to seek more treatment and wish to be kept comfortable. Hospice staff understands the special needs you and your family have at this difficult time. Nurses, social workers, aids, clergy and volunteers may also be available to help. Hospice care can be provided in your home or in a hospice facility.
Who will help plan my discharge?

Discharge planning begins the moment you enter the hospital. Our goal is to get you home safely and in good health. The health care team, under the direction of the doctor, will advise you about your care needs after discharge. Please remember, you are the most important member of the team. Your needs and preferences are of utmost concern to the hospital. The following health care members are available to help with your discharge plan.

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Social workers
- Dietitians
- Physical Therapists (PT)
- Occupational Therapists (OT)
- Speech Language Pathologists (SLP)
- Pharmacists
- Respiratory Therapists (RT)
- Case Manager or Patient Care Resource Manager (PCRM)

The Case Manager/PCRM is a service specific case manager who will help to bring all of the plans together and be available to aid you in making decisions.

How will these services be paid for?

You are probably concerned about the cost of the services you will need. The cost of services may depend on your income and insurance status. Members of the discharge team will help you explore coverage within your budget for needed services. Sometimes other plans may have to be made. The services that you can receive may be controlled by your ability to pay for these services. There is a lot of variation in what insurance will and will not cover. Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance may only pay for a small part of the costs. Financial counseling is available to answer your questions about paying your bill if you do not have health insurance. Questions about your eligibility for Medicaid can also be addressed.

What will happen on the day I leave the hospital?

On the day of discharge, you will receive written discharge instructions. These instructions will include information about medicines, activity, diet, home care treatments and follow-up appointments. Please take time to review these instructions. If you are unsure about something, please ask your nurse or doctor.

We feel confident that the planning you and your health care team have done will support and help you to a full recovery.
What if I need more help after I leave the hospital?

Our relationship with you does not have to end when you leave the hospital. If you have problems with your care or if you do not understand the instructions given to you, please call your Case Manager/PCRM or doctor’s office. If you have questions about your medicines, please call your doctor’s office or local pharmacist. These hospital and community resources are also available:

**Patient Experience / Billing Questions / Lost Property**
If you have questions related to these areas, you can obtain further information from the Hospital Operator by calling 614-293-8000. He or she will connect you to someone to assist you.

**Library for Health Information**
Located in the 5th floor atrium of Doan Hall and Rhodes Hall, the Library for Health Information is a consumer health library. You or your family can request health information about your condition while you are in the hospital or after you go home. Call 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu to make a request.

**Enterostomal Services**
If you need instruction or support in caring for a colostomy, ileostomy or urinary diversion, a registered nurse, with special training in enterostomal therapy (ET), can help. The ET nurse will instruct you while you are in the hospital and will be a resource when you leave the hospital.

**The James Line**
The James Line is a 24-hour information line to the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Ohio State’s Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute. You can get the latest information on cancer prevention and early detection, as well as advice and support on cancer related issues. Call 1-800-293-5066.

**Outpatient Clinic Services**
Visits to the doctor’s office, community health center or physical therapist are called outpatient or ambulatory care. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center offers many services that you may use as an outpatient after you leave the hospital.

**Rehabilitation**
Ohio State’s Wexner Medical Center offers comprehensive acute (inpatient) and outpatient rehabilitation including physical, occupational, recreational, speech and cognitive therapies. Rehabilitation may be needed for patients recovering from neurological disorders, stroke, sports injuries, automobile accidents, orthopedic injuries or other problems.

**Center for Wellness and Prevention**
Located at the Martha Morehouse Medical Plaza, 2050 Kenny Road, Suite 1010, the Center offers group and individual education. Special rehabilitation programs are available for patients with cardiac and pulmonary problems. Exercise, weight management and other topics to improve your health are also offered. Call 614-293-2800 for more information.

**Support Groups**
If you are interested in meeting formally or informally with people who share situations similar to yours, support groups are available. Small groups may meet regularly or set up a telephone call to provide one another with advice, emotional support, information and other aid.
Community Resources
A wide range of community services are available. Talk to the social worker or Case Manager/PCRM for assistance.

HandsOn Central Ohio
This organization provides community wide information and referral services. Call 211, 24 hours a day or call 614-221-6766 during business hours for more information.

Adult Day Care
A community based group program designed to meet the needs of functionally impaired adults through individualized plans of care. Structured comprehensive programs offer a variety of health, social and related support services in a protective environment. Participants may be seen up to five days a week. Funding sources are varied but may include PASSPORT, Senior Options, Veteran’s Administration and long term care insurance.

Counseling
Community mental health centers have a number of services that you can use. Netcare Access provides 24-hour mental health and substance abuse crisis and assessment services for Franklin County. Call 614-276-2273 for more information.

Financial
Call your local county Department of Human Services for information on Medicaid or Ohio Healthy Start (Children’s Health Insurance Program). For information on Medicare, Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), call 1-800-772-1213.

Health Department
Your local Health Department has resources and information about health related problems.

Home Health Care Services
If you need skilled nursing care, physical or occupational therapy or other home care services, search for “Home Health Care” resources in your area at www.yellowpages.com.

Meals on Wheels
If you are over 60 years old and home bound and reside in Franklin, Marion or Madison counties, you can have a hot meal delivered to your home. Chronically ill persons under 60 may also qualify. Call Lifecare Alliance at 614-278-3130 for more information or to be screened as a client.

Medical Equipment
Aids, such as walkers, shower chairs, mechanical feeding devices, page turners, and bedside commodes, can be obtained from local companies. Not all equipment is covered by insurance and coverage varies among polices. Check with your company’s policy to determine your coverage. Many insurance companies have a list of medical equipment companies you can use.

In summary
Planning to leave the hospital is one more step towards your recovery. We hope this information helps you to plan for and make decisions about your care needs after discharge. Please talk with your health care team about your questions and concerns.

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Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

The Library for Health Information is available to help you find more health information at (614) 293-3707 or e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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